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a single composite mating connector having a recess, the recess being dimensioned so that during an insertion process of the plug connector into the mating connector, the guide element is guided into the recess, and in an inserted state, the recess is set apart from the guide element.

Attached hereto is a marked-up version of the changes made to the claim by the current amendment. The attached page is captioned "VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE."

REMARKS

Claims 1-6 are pending in this application. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration of the present application in view of the above amendment and the following remarks.

Claims 1-6 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,017,233 to Fry et al. (the "Fry reference"). It is respectfully submitted that the reference fails to anticipate claims 1-6 for at least the following reasons.

To anticipate a claim under § 102, a single prior art reference must identically disclose each and every claim element. See Lindeman Maschinenfabrik v. American Hoist and Derrick, 730 F.2d 1452, 1458 (Fed. Cir. 1984). If any claimed element is absent from a prior art reference, it cannot anticipate the claim. See Rowe v. Dror, 112 F.3d 473, 478 (Fed. Cir. 1997). Anticipation requires the presence in a single prior art reference disclosure of each and every element of the claim invention, arranged as in the claim. Lindeman, 703 F.2d 1458 (Emphasis added).

The final Office Action dated December 18, 2001 states that the Fry reference

discloses a plug connector and mating connector as recited in claim 1. The Office Action also states that the Fry reference discloses a centering element having a lug-like form and configured to cooperate with the mating connector. The Examiner maintains that the Fry reference discloses a mating connector which includes components 18, 20 and 22 which are utilized for mating as elements of the mating connector. The Examiner states that the element 22 with the recess, when taken with elements 18 and 20, is considered the mating connector. The Examiner equates the electrical connector 16 of the Fry reference with the plug connector of claim 1, and the Examiner equates the panel 18, connecting device 20 and retaining cap 22, collectively, of Fry reference with the mating connector of claim 1. This interpretation is explicitly indicated in the Advisory Action dated March 20, 2002: "the concept of mating connector consisting of three components seems to be proper since claim 1 does not claim the mating connector as a single composite connector."

In response to the Examiner's comments in the Advisory Action, Applicants have amended claim 1 to explicitly recite "a single composite mating connector." As previously noted by Applicants, and as implicitly acknowledged by the Examiner, the Fry reference clearly does not disclose a single composite mating connector as recited in amended claim 1.

In view of the above discussion, Applicants respectfully submit that the Fry reference does not anticipate claim 1. Claims 2-6 depend from claim 1, so the above argument regarding claim 1 applies equally to claims 2-6, and the Fry reference also fails to anticipate claims 2-6. Withdrawal of this rejection is respectfully requested.

CONCLUSION

In light of the foregoing, Applicants respectfully submit that all of the pending claims are in condition for allowance. Prompt reconsideration and allowance of the present

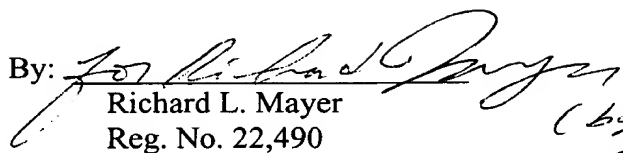
application are therefore earnestly solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

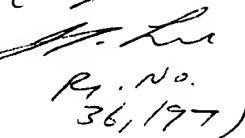
KENYON & KENYON

Dated: May 7, 2002

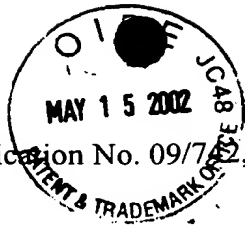
By:


Richard L. Mayer
Reg. No. 22,490

One Broadway
New York, New York 10004
Phone: (212) 425-7200
Fax: (212) 425-5288


Reg. No.
36,197)

CUSTOMER NO. 26646
PATENT & TRADEMARK OFFICE



U.S. Application No. 09/782,980

Docket No.: 10191/1674

VERSION WITH MARKINGS TO SHOW CHANGES MADE

IN THE CLAIMS:

Claim 1 has been amended as follows:

1. (Amended) An electric connector, comprising:

a plug connector having a guide element;

a single composite mating connector having a recess, the recess being dimensioned so that during an insertion process of the plug connector into the mating connector, the guide element is guided into the recess, and in an inserted state, the recess is set apart from the guide element.

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